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ABSTRACT

Frequently-asked questions about English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instruction are posed and answered. Questions address the following: the goals of ESL instruction; how ESL differs from bilingual education; how students needing ESL are identified; where interpreters are found; the "Lau Decision"; how to find out how much English the student understands; the distinction between conversational and academic proficiency in English; ESL and age-appropriate placement; the ESL teacher's role; early childhood ESL programs; how much ESL is enough; how soon ESL students should be mainstreamed; dealing with special education needs; what regular classroom teachers should do to help ESL students; sheltered English; the role of bilingual aides; ESL students' use of their native language in school; grade retention and promotion and academic standards; parent involvement; instructional materials; use of instructional technology; ESL program funding; program recordkeeping; ongoing professional training for ESL teachers; and ESL inservice education for regular teachers. Lists of print materials, publishers and distributors of ESL materials, and organizations useful as resources are appended. (MSE)

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FASTBACK

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English as a Second Language: 25 Questions and Answers

Donovan R. Walling

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by
Donovan R. Walling

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Table of Contents

Introduction 7

25 Questions and Answers About ESL 9

1. What are the goals of ESL instruction? 9
2. How is ESL different from bilingual education? 10
3. How do we identify students who need ESL? 11
4. Where do we find interpreters? 13
5. What is the "Lau Decision"? 14
6. How can we find out how much English the students really understand? 15
7. What is the difference between conversational and academic proficiency in English 17
8. What about age-appropriate placement? 18
9. What is the role of the ESL teacher? 19
10. Do early childhood ESL programs differ from regular early childhood programs? 20
11. How much ESL is enough? 21
12. How soon should ESL students be mainstreamed into regular classes? 22
13. What about special education needs among ESL students? 23
14. What should "regular" teachers do to help ESL students? 25

15. What is "sheltered" English? 26
16. How can bilingual aides help? 26
17. Should ESL students be allowed to speak their native language in school? 27
18. Should ESL students be retained if they fail to meet minimum academic standards? 28
19. How should we involve the parents of ESL students? . 29
20. Where do we find materials for ESL instruction? 30
21. Can instructional technology help in ESL instruction? 31
22. How can we fund the ESL program? 32
23. What kinds of records should be kept for the ESL program? 32
24. What type of ongoing training should ESL teachers have? 33
25. What types of inservice should regular teachers have in ESL? 34

Resources 35
Books and Articles 35
Publishers and Distributors of ESL Materials 36
Organizations 38

Introduction

The need for English-as-a-second-language (ESL) instruction is increasing across the United States. Schools that had never previously worked with second-language learners are confronted with new challenges every day. Two factors underlie this increased need.

First, America serves as a haven for immigrants and refugees. The South, West, and Southwest long have been a destination for Spanish-speaking newcomers from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Latin America. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, many communities began to receive waves of refugees from Southeast Asia and, later, from the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. For example, in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, where I supervised the ESL program from 1986 until 1991, the population of second-language learners grew from fewer than 20 students in the early 1970s to nearly 1,000 for school year 1992-93. And Sheboygan is by no means unique.

Second, increasing international trade – particularly foreign ownership of U.S.-based companies – has brought another group of second-language learners into American schools, the children of foreign nationals in middle- and upper-management positions in international business. Japanese-, German-, and French-speaking students are among the increasing populations. Unlike refugee students, who often come from impoverished backgrounds and may have received little or no formal schooling prior to arriving in the United States, this second group is often from an advantaged home environment and has

received high quality schooling in their native countries. Also, unlike immigrants and refugees, these second-language learners are generally in this country on a temporary basis, typically for two to five years. While each group of second-language learners offers a different set of challenges, both have a great deal in common.

The purpose of this fastback is to deal with some of the most frequently asked questions about English as a second language in order to provide instructional leaders in school districts that are encountering second-language learners for the first time with some "starting points." It also serves as a general source of information for parents and educators interested in ESL.

The 25 questions are drawn from my experiences and those of my colleagues across Wisconsin and the Midwest. The answers are designed to articulate general principles, which state departments of education and school districts can shape to meet their own needs.

25 Questions and Answers About ESL

1. What are the goals of ESL instruction?

The primary goal of ESL instruction is to teach students English. However, a number of secondary goals are embedded in this primary goal. An effective ESL program also:

- maintains and produces academic progress,
- provides for the student's integration into the mainstream of school and society,
- validates and preserves the student's native language and culture.

Most students in U.S. schools who do not speak English are linguistically at-risk of school failure. Simply teaching them English will not ensure academic success. They need to be able to maintain the academic skills they acquired in their native-language school (if they attended one) and to acquire new academic skills while they are learning English.

Some ESL students need to acquire "school skills" as well, particularly refugee youngsters who may never have attended a school. All ESL students need to become part of the mainstream in school and in the community. Thus an effective ESL program does not isolate second-language learners from their English-speaking peers. Rather, the program provides for a gradual transition from intensive, comprehensive ESL instruction to occasional or tutorial assistance, usually

by moving from partial to full mainstreaming with age-appropriate English-speaking peers.

Likewise, parent involvement is an integral part of the successful ESL program. Involving parents of ESL students is important not only for their academic success but also for supporting the *family* objective of effective functioning in the larger society. This objective can not be accomplished by the student alone without affecting the integrity of the family unit by creating intergenerational tensions between the emerging English-speaking students and their non-English-speaking parents.

Consequently, an effective ESL program strives to validate the student's native language and culture. While furthering language growth in students' native tongue is usually beyond the scope of most ESL programs, an effort must be made – often by means of parent involvement – to preserve the student's home language and to recognize the importance of the student's native culture and customs.

2. How is ESL different from bilingual education?

In general, bilingual education is distinguished from ESL in that students are taught initially in both English and their native language. By using the native language for academic instruction, teachers help students maintain the momentum of content learning while simultaneously learning to understand and use English. ESL instruction, on the other hand, focuses on teaching students English using a variety of instructional strategies, such as simplified or "sheltered" English, gestures, and pictures, to convey academic content in the absence of native-language teaching.

Some research suggests that bilingual education is more effective than ESL in helping students continue to make academic progress while learning English. However, the option to implement a bilingual program may not be viable if the school has only a small number of second-language learners, if it must serve students from several language backgrounds, or if it cannot secure the services of a native-

language teacher. In these circumstances, an ESL program may be more feasible.

The preparation of ESL teachers concentrates on linguistic understanding, what language is and how it is learned. (See fastback 278 *How Children Learn a Second Language*, by Kenneth M. Johns.) By modifying standard classroom instruction, ESL teachers can help students maintain academic skills and acquire new knowledge while also helping them become proficient in English. Moreover, ESL teachers are able to teach groups of students from mixed language backgrounds in the same classroom.

Some people advocate a so-called immersion program, that is, simply placing second-language learners in regular classes. This view often is expressed by those whose parents or grandparents emigrated from Europe, were enrolled in school upon arrival, and learned English as best they could. This "sink or swim" approach is likely to result in frustration and failure. At best, students in this situation find their academic progress diminished by the need to cope, unaided, with learning a new language.

True language-immersion programs, such as those for college foreign-language majors studying a year abroad or those for business executives who are taking an assignment in a foreign country, are designed with linguistic principles at their core. They are intense, highly concentrated programs designed to teach a specific second language as quickly as possible. While true immersion programs are no doubt effective, few schools systems have the resources to provide such a comprehensive program. ESL programs, which, in fact, are a modified immersion approach, are more feasible, especially in circumstances with small numbers of second-language learners or mixed language groups.

3. How do we identify students who need ESL?

The first step in identifying potential ESL students is a home language survey, usually administered when the student is enrolled in

school. This survey consists of a short list of questions designed to ascertain the student's language background. Typical questions are:

Does the student speak a language other than English?
Do the student's parents speak a language other than English? If so, do they also speak English?
What language is used most in the home?

The home language survey is a key tool for ensuring that no student is denied ESL services because he "sounded" like a native speaker. Students who come from non-English backgrounds may be conversationally proficient, yet will need ESL instruction to achieve academic proficiency and succeed in school. Consequently, all entering students (with their parents) need to complete a home language survey. (For a fuller discussion of conversational and academic proficiency, see Question 7.)

If the answers to the home language survey indicate a background language other than English, then a more formal assessment of the student's English proficiency is needed *before* placement of the student. This formal assessment, normally conducted by an ESL specialist, provides vital information for placing the student in an appropriate educational setting. Ideally, this assessment is multifaceted. It may include interviews with the parents and the student as well as one or more written measures. Assessment instruments usually have both visual (print, drawings, and photographs) and oral components. (See Question 6 for more details about assessing English proficiency.)

When a student is identified as limited-English-proficient (LEP), most ESL programs designate proficiency levels as follows:

LEP 1: Non-English-speaking. The student may understand single sentences but speaks only isolated words or phrases in English.
LEP 2: Limited proficiency. The student speaks English only with considerable help. The student may understand parts of lessons

and be able to follow simple directions, but reading and writing skills are considerably lower than English-speaking age/grade peers.

LEP 3: Limited proficiency. The student understands considerable spoken English but speaks with difficulty. Reading and writing skills are significantly below those of age/grade peers.

LEP 4: Limited proficiency. The student speaks and understands English with acceptable proficiency. Reading and writing skills are low but approaching appropriate age/grade levels.

LEP 5: Fluent (sometimes designated as FEP or Fluent English Proficient). The student is fully fluent in English; however, overall academic achievement may still be low because of language or cultural influences.

These proficiency levels provide a starting point for ESL instruction, with students being reassessed on a regular basis. After initial identification and placement, ESL students progress through the remaining proficiency levels until they can confidently be "exited" from the program, that is, when they have achieved academic and linguistic parity with their age/grade peers.

4. Where do we find interpreters?

During enrollment, a good place to start is the family. Often a parent or guardian will speak English. For example, the Japanese businessman is likely to be fluent in English, and sometimes his wife may be proficient. They can be invaluable in helping their children as well as children of other temporary residents.

Immigrants and refugees often have relatives or sponsors who have helped them come to the United States, can speak the language of the newcomers, and can be asked to interpret initially.

As the non-English-speaking population grows, it helps to have a cadre of interpreters on which to draw. A staff survey can locate individuals already employed by the schools who have a measure of

fluency in one or more foreign languages. From the survey, a directory can be developed with annual updates of persons with foreign-language fluency sufficient to meet the needs of the ESL program. (It is also a good resource directory for teachers of foreign language, social studies, and other subjects.)

If an internal staff survey does not yield results, a community survey may. This kind of survey can be achieved using a small newspaper ad, the school district newsletter, or individual school fliers. Nearby colleges are another source of potential interpreters, either faculty or students. The college already may have an interpreter directory that can be obtained simply for the asking.

Peer interpreters are another possibility, especially when dealing with communication problems of students new to the ESL program. Typically, there is a high degree of interaction in ESL classrooms, with those more experienced in English helping their less-fluent peers to understand what is going on during lessons. In time, ESL youngsters often become interpreters for their non-English-speaking parents. This can be a valuable aid to home-school communication, although ESL teachers must be alert for possible misinterpretations.

Keep in mind that volunteer interpreters may be fluent at a conversational level, yet be unable to communicate technical terms and concepts accurately, thus limiting their effectiveness for counseling functions, test administration, or personal tutoring. Knowing the level of an interpreter's proficiency in English will determine the kinds of situations in which the interpreter can perform successfully.

5. What is the "Lau Decision"?

Much of the impetus for ESL programs stems from the "Lau Decision" by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1974. Basing its decision on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination because of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity receiving federal funding, the Court ruled, in the case of *Lau* v. *Nichols*, that the San Francisco schools had discriminated against Chinese students.

The Court said in part: "[T]here is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education."

The next year, the Office of Civil Rights issued guidelines that held school districts accountable for the special language needs of language-minority children who are non-English-speaking or with limited English proficiency.

These guidelines, which are incorporated in one form or another in most state ESL regulations, require school districts to develop a system for identifying and assessing students with limited English proficiency and providing them with equal educational opportunities. Such students must be served in a transitional bilingual program, a bilingual-bicultural program, or a multi-language/multicultural program.

6. How can we find out how much English the students really understand?

Finding out how much a non-English-speaking or limited-English-proficient student understands begins with the language background survey. (See Question 3.) The follow-up interview also will be informative. For more formal assessments, a variety of instruments are available. Following is a partial list of readily available assessment instruments:

Pre-IPT, IPT I, IPT II (IDEA Oral Language Proficiency Test)
LAS (Pre-LAS, LAS-O-I, etc.) (Language Assessment Scales)
LAB (I, II, III, IV) (Language Assessment Battery)
SLEP (Secondary Level English Proficiency)

These and other assessment instruments, which are available at various proficiency levels, provide a measure of how much English students understand at different ages. The results can be used, along with other information, to determine oral proficiency, language dominance,

and reading and writing ability, all of which will help with initial placement in the ESL program. ESL teachers often supplement specific language assessments with such measures as the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test or some form of cloze procedure to assess students' reading knowledge more accurately.

A multi-dimensional assessment of a student's English proficiency is necessary in order to shape the ESL instructional program. Formal assessments, such as those above, are part of the picture. But they can be limited by the student's cultural background, age, experience with schools and tests, and other factors unique to the student. Another dimension of assessment must be observation. How does the student perform in real-life situations? How well does the student interact with peers, both other ESL students and native-English speakers? Can the student understand and speak to the teacher?

Combining both formal assessments and teacher observations gives a much clearer picture of students' competence in English. These formal and informal assessments will help to establish the LEP level of a student (see Question 3). With annual evaluations, students' ESL programs can be modified so that they can progress through the LEP levels to full English proficiency.

What about tests in a student's native language? Native-language assessments are sometimes useful to determine language dominance and subject matter knowledge. They also can be helpful in diagnosing learning problems not necessarily connected to limited English proficiency. (See Question 13.) However, they have limited use in assessing a student's knowledge of English.

A word of caution about using native-language testing: different dialects can invalidate test results. For example, Spanish-language assessments designed for Puerto Rican immigrants in New York City are of limited use in testing Spanish-speaking migrants from Mexico because of the differences in the two dialects of Spanish. Likewise, White Hmong and Green Hmong are different dialects in this Southeast Asian population. One has only to recall the subtle and not-so-

subtle differences between American English and British English to realize that dialect does make a difference. Consequently, it is advisable to read carefully the norming information for native-language tests and be guided accordingly.

7. What is the difference between conversational and academic proficiency in English?

Students – or anyone for that matter – acquire a new language in stages. First, they learn to recognize English words when they are connected with concrete images, such as the word *STOP*, which they see on an octagonal sign while driving. Next, or perhaps simultaneously, come short phrases and common expressions. As acquaintance with the language grows and production of speech becomes more comfortable, students gradually acquire a conversational level of proficiency. They can discuss everyday subjects with some fluency and respond to questions easily. However, they may not be able to read easily – not even a newspaper, let alone an unfamiliar text.

Most researchers agree that a relatively high level of conversational proficiency can be attained in as little as two to three years; but it may take five to seven years of consistent and structured study to arrive at a level of full proficiency, wherein students can tackle unfamiliar written materials with native-level ability. This is called academic proficiency, a level of linguistic command sufficient to enable students to discern content and meaning based on experience and familiarity with how the language works.

Conversational proficiency is often sufficient for social integration with English-speaking peers; however, it is not enough to ensure academic success. The greatest mistake that can be made is to withdraw ESL instructional services prior to the student's achievement of academic proficiency.

8. What about age-appropriate placement?

Academic and social needs of ESL students can be met only in age-appropriate settings. Thus it would be inappropriate to place an adolescent ESL student at, say, LEP Level 1 with younger children. If linguistically simpler materials from a previous grade are the best available, they can be brought into the age-appropriate setting for use with the second-language learner. (See Question 20 regarding locating ESL instructional materials.)

Many Asian and some Hispanic children are smaller in stature than their American age peers, and they sometimes look younger than they are. Appearance characteristics should not used to justify placement of older children in classes with younger children. Likewise, some refugees arrive with incorrect birth records, sometimes indicating a younger age in order to claim a more advantageous status. Consequently, educators need to be careful about suspect records and make a "best guess" about the youngster's true age after conferences with parents or comparison with other second-language learners whose true age is known. As a general guide for placement, ESL students should not be more than one year older than their English-speaking classmates.

This guideline may have to be modified at the high school level. Although most U.S. students finish high school by age 18, regulations in most states allow students to attend high school up to age 21 or through the school year in which they turn 21. In some cases, ESL students might enroll in high school at ages 18 to 21. In order to make an appropriate placement, it is advisable to convene a panel consisting of an ESL teacher, a guidance counselor, and the building administrator to consider the student's placement. The panel needs to consider whether it is reasonable to expect that the student will meet district graduation requirements by age 21. If it seems clear that the student will not be able to meet those requirements, then the panel can assist the student in making the transition to an ESL alterna-

tive, such as adult ESL classes offered by the school system or a nearby college or technical institute.

9. What is the role of the ESL teacher?

ESL teachers perform several functions:

Primary Teacher. For new arrivals especially, the ESL teacher is often the primary teacher, providing both English-language instruction and basic instruction in most subjects of the curriculum. This is particularly true at the elementary level; at the secondary level the ESL teacher may team-teach with a subject matter specialist.

Special Tutor. As second-language learners are mainstreamed to a greater extent (see Questions 11 and 12), the role of the ESL teacher changes to one of a tutor, helping students navigate unfamiliar curricular territory. To ensure continuous progress, it is important that the ESL teacher be available to students as they become independent of primary English instruction. The instructional schedule of the ESL teacher should be able to accommodate both primary, direct instruction and tutorial assistance.

Instructional Resource. In addition to serving as a resource to second-language learners, the ESL teacher also can provide valuable insights to regular classroom teachers to increase their awareness of instructional strategies that are suited to the needs of ESL students mainstreamed into their classes. (See Question 25 for specific inservice suggestions; also fastback 340 *Mainstreaming Language Minority Students in Reading and Writing* by Kenneth M. Johns and Connie Espinoza.)

Assessment and Placement. Directly related to the first three functions is that of performing assessments of students' English proficiency and academic progress (see Questions 6 and 7) and advising parents, administrators, and counselors on appropriate placement of ESL students.

If your school has a large number of ESL students, one way to accommodate all four functions is to set up an ESL center. ESL teachers can use the center to:

- provide direct instruction to small groups of ESL students,
- conduct both scheduled and drop-in tutorials,
- maintain a resource collection for both ESL and regular teachers,
- offer outreach resource services to other teachers,
- perform linguistic and academic assessment, and
- counsel parents.

A well-designed ESL center might have one or more connected classrooms divided into focal areas, such as mini-classrooms, tutorial alcoves, and resource and interest centers. Portable partitions can be used to separate spaces, allowing for flexible arrangements as the ESL population changes.

10. Do early childhood ESL programs differ from regular early childhood programs?

While early childhood education programs (ages 3 to 5) provide a nurturing environment, the ESL program at this level should move beyond the nurturing, language-learning experiences that take place from birth in a child's native language. The role of the early childhood ESL teacher is to provide a developmental program that nurtures English-language acquisition and fosters the development of appropriate school skills that these children need in order to succeed in their continuing schooling and in the larger society.

An early childhood ESL classroom may have many of the features of a regular early childhood classroom, but there is a concerted emphasis on language development. In addition to the regular early childhood activities related to number concepts, reading readiness, art, and physical development, ESL children need many opportunities to practice their English through finger plays, jazz chants, music, and dramatic activities.

The early childhood ESL classroom also needs to provide cultural information and experiences that help children bridge the gap between their native culture and life in the United States. Parent involvement

can be an important component in the success of early childhood ESL. (See Question 19.)

When ESL children are mainstreamed into regular early childhood classes, the goals of the regular teacher, with assistance from the ESL specialist, are to:

- Provide experiences that enable ESL children to learn at their individual levels.
- Be aware and accepting of the cultural values and differences of ESL children.
- Evaluate the ESL children's progress in achieving English proficiency by using realistic expectations and recognizing that they may not progress at the same pace as native-English speakers.
- Provide a warm, caring environment where individual differences are accepted and valued and cross-cultural friendships are encouraged.

Some school districts provide a full-day kindergarten for ESL children, with a half-day in an ESL setting and a half-day in regular kindergarten. This arrangement is particularly appropriate for second-language learners at LEP levels 3-5, who then may be fully mainstreamed when they enter first grade. LEP 1-2 children may not speak or understand sufficient English to participate successfully in a regular kindergarten.

11. How much ESL is enough?

The amount of ESL instruction required to achieve linguistic and academic parity with non-ESL peers will vary with individual students, depending on such factors as general language aptitude, motivation, age, prior school experience, and parental involvement.

Most research suggests as a rule of thumb that five to seven years are required for students to achieve native-English proficiency. All things being equal, younger children may arrive at proficiency sooner than older students. For example, it is not unusual to find that 25%

to 30% of ESL kindergartners are ready for a fully mainstreamed class after two years in an ESL preschool. On the other hand, immigrant students who begin studying English in junior high school may not reach full proficiency by the end of high school.

A longitudinal study of bilingual programs conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in 1990 concluded that more than five years of ESL may be more effective than shorter periods. The standard time limit that children can remain in federally funded ESL programs has been five years; however, in light of the research, that standard is being reconsidered.

12. How soon should ESL students be mainstreamed into regular classes?

Effective mainstreaming is accomplished gradually, depending on the pace of English acquisition. For non-English speakers and very limited English speakers, the ESL teacher is the primary instructor for all subjects at the elementary level and for most subjects (sometimes with the assistance of a bilingual aide) at the secondary level. Early mainstreaming in activity-centered classes, such as art, music, and physical education, can be done with most second-language learners almost from the moment they enter school.

Mainstreaming is best accomplished by placing second-language learners initially in the least language-intensive subjects and then gradually adding more language-intensive subjects as the student experiences success. Usually, this progression begins with placement in the activity-centered classes as indicated above. Math and science follow, then social studies, and finally language arts/reading.

Progression through the LEP levels (see Question 3) can be used as a guide for mainstreaming decisions. However, there is not a direct correlation between the LEP levels and the language-intensity of the various school subjects. ESL teachers and regular teachers will need to discuss the nature of each course in order to determine appropriate placement for each ESL student.

The following chart can be used as a general guide for matching LEP level with appropriate subjects.

LEP 1: Art, music, physical education, limited vocational/technical involving such hands-on activities as woodworking, cooking, or sewing.

LEP 2: Low language-intensive vocational/technical subjects, math and science with an emphasis on experiential learning.

LEP 3: Math and science in general, social studies for selected students.

LEP 4: Social studies, language arts, and reading.

One exception to this general guide may be reading. In some schools the reading resource teacher can be enlisted as a partner with the ESL teacher to provide individualized reading instruction to second-language learners. Also, using bilingual classroom aides can facilitate earlier and more effective mainstreaming in many cases, depending on the language proficiency and instructional background of the aides. (See Question 16.)

13. What about special education needs among ESL students?

ESL students tend to qualify for special education in roughly the same proportion as non-ESL students. Possible exceptions are refugees, some of whom are victims of inadequate prenatal care, poor nutrition, untreated illness, neglect, and abuse. These factors can lead to learning problems that will qualify a student for special education. However, determining the exact nature or extent of exceptionality can be very difficult with ESL students.

Perhaps the best initial indicator of exceptionality in ESL students is their failure to succeed in their native language in addition to pronounced difficulty in learning English or achieving academically in English-only classes. For informal assessment, it helps if there is a cohort population of ESL students with whom to compare. An inex-

perienced teacher may want to ask a colleague working with a larger ESL population to observe the student in question.

Formal assessment usually is done by an interdisciplinary team consisting of the ESL teacher, a classroom teacher, and a special education teacher. Also, school psychologists, counselors, and social workers can be valuable participants on the team. Parents need to be involved to give information about the student's development and personal history and to assist in making the placement recommendations. Involving parents may require the services of a bilingual aide or translator. Also, the school administrator who has the authority to commit special education resources for the student must be involved.

Because of a lack of appropriate testing instruments, assessment may have to be made on the basis of anecdotal information. Psychological assessment instruments are not available in most foreign languages, with the possible exception of Spanish. And even when they can be found, school personnel who are both competent to administer such tests and fluent in the target language are not available. In most cases, bilingual aides cannot be used to administer psychological tests, unless they have been extensively trained. (See Question 16.) However, consultants might be available if the school district is in proximity to a major urban center or a university with a strong ESL department. Otherwise, the multidisciplinary team will need to rely on their best professional judgment.

In addition to identifying ESL students with special education needs, the staff should be equally alert for those who are gifted. Second-language learners are as likely as native speakers to possess special gifts or talents. As with special education students, a multidisciplinary team can be used to identify gifted ESL students. Whether an ESL student is gifted or learning disabled, appropriate placement will require a team approach involving input from several professionals who can orchestrate an effective plan of instruction.

14. What should "regular" teachers do to help ESL students?

Regular teachers, those without specific ESL training, can help second-language learners in their classrooms by keeping three principles in mind. These principles apply from kindergarten through high school:

1. Make language visible.
2. Facilitate peer support.
3. Be flexible.

Some of the ways teachers can make language visible are by using gestures, writing information on the chalkboard, labeling items, and referring to pictures. Second-language learners need to have multisensory input. Just talking to them may produce a smile or a nod, but that does not mean they really comprehend. The teacher needs to solicit a response that demonstrates understanding or comprehension, for example, giving directions to see if the student responds with an appropriate action.

Teachers can facilitate peer support by structuring group learning situations. Students working in pairs or teams allow for many kinds of interaction with natural language. And student-to-student teaching can reinforce and extend the efforts of the regular teacher. Cooperative learning strategies help ESL students break out of the isolation imposed by limited English proficiency.

Teachers must be flexible by giving the second-language learner time to wrestle with the new language. It is common for second-language learners, when confronted with a new situation, to "clam up" for a time. During this silent period, they are taking in the situation and attempting to make sense of what is going on. If they are given time and made to feel comfortable, they eventually will respond.

Flexibility in instructional approach is also essential. When one strategy does not work, teachers need to try a different strategy. Second-language learners, like their English-speaking peers, learn in different ways and respond individually to different teaching styles.

(See Question 15; also fastback 278 *How Children Learn a Second Language*, by Kenneth M. Johns.)

15. What is "sheltered" English?

The term "sheltered" English refers to using the language in a simplified yet holistic manner in order to help ESL students comprehend. It means speaking and writing clearly and directly, avoiding jargon, idioms, and complicated vocabulary. Equally important is the use of such holistic components of communication as inflection, gestures, and other nonverbal cues to language meaning. Following are a few suggestions:

1. Speak clearly and naturally but at a slightly slower pace.
2. Simplify vocabulary without "talking down" to students.
3. Give directions in a variety of ways.
4. Use examples or point out observable models.
5. Give special attention to key words that convey meaning; point them out or write them on the board.
6. Avoid jargon or idioms that might be misunderstood if taken literally.
7. Read written directions out loud, and write oral directions on the board.
8. Allow time for translation by an aide or classmate and allow time for discussion to clarify meaning.
9. Divide complex or extended language discourse into smaller, more manageable units.
10. Allow extra time. Remember, new learners of English are coping with translating back and forth between languages as well as dealing with new content.

16. How can bilingual aides help?

Bilingual aides can be invaluable in the classroom. However, their effectiveness depends on several factors: their proficiency in both the

native language and English; their level of education; their ability to communicate instructional concepts; and, in some cases, their standing in their native-language community.

Bilingual aides, like regular classroom aides, can perform clerical tasks and do some teacher-directed tutoring. They also can respond to students' needs to some extent, when those needs are communicated in the native language. Some bilingual aides are effective teachers in their own right and, under supervision, can provide some group instruction to supplement that of the regular teacher.

Bilingual aides also perform important translation duties, from assisting ESL teachers in giving directions for assignments to translating instructional materials. They also might be asked to serve on the multidisciplinary team that does the assessment of ESL students being considered for placement in special education. Their role on the team would be to translate oral or written information that is exchanged between the team and the student or parents.

Competent bilingual aides serve a variety of liaison roles, too. They may assist counselors in scheduling ESL students, work with regular classroom teachers when ESL students are mainstreamed, and provide translation when communicating with parents, either in face-to-face meetings or through letters, pamphlets, or newsletters.

With a little training a bilingual aide can administer quizzes and other teacher-made tests. However, it is not advisable to ask a bilingual aide to translate or to administer standardized tests. Most standardized tests are culture-bound, at least to some extent, and cannot simply be translated from English to another language without a loss of text integrity. Moreover, most bilingual aides are not trained in test administration and are not likely to be competent to administer tests even in their native language.

17. Should ESL students be allowed to speak their native language in school?

Yes, by all means. Little can be gained by trying to make students speak only English, and much may be lost.

Effective ESL teachers, while often limited in what they can do to actively promote native-language learning and true bilingualism, do make concerted efforts to support students' native language. These efforts may be as simple as structuring group activities to include students at several levels of second-language proficiency. Thus students who are more proficient in English can help their more limited peers, including occasionally translating information into their native language.

Bilingual aides also function to support native language, and the interplay of languages during academic learning and other activities increases the likelihood that students will not only retain their native language but will grow in native-language fluency as they learn English.

Another way to support native language in the ESL classroom is through cultural sharing and appreciation activities. Sponsoring a Multicultural Fair provides opportunities to wear traditional clothing, sing songs, and share traditional foods. Such activities increase ESL students' appreciation of their own cultures and traditions, while also introducing these cultures to their English-speaking peers. Involving parents in such activities and encouraging them to provide native-language models in the home will help the ESL students to respect and appreciate their language and their culture. (See Question 19.)

18. Should ESL students be retained if they fail to meet minimum academic standards?

Most school districts have begun to recognize that retention is an ineffective policy. In fact, it is more likely to lead to continuing academic failure and increase the chances that a student will drop out of school before graduation. The research literature in education is replete with data that support the conclusion that retention is far more harmful than helpful in most cases. Clearly, if retention is ineffective for the mainstream population, it is ineffective for students who are already at-risk as second-language learners.

ESL students are coping not only with learning a new language but also with simultaneously learning new academic content in that new language. Therefore, progress likely will be slower for many ESL students when compared to their native English-speaking classmates. Eventually the achievement level will even out. As proficiency in English increases, so will the pace of academic learning increase. Again, the five- to seven-year rule of thumb for ESL students reaching full academic and linguistic parity with their English-speaking peers is a reasonable guide.

Retention in grade for ESL students is likely to increase the amount of time required to reach parity and may result in a level of frustration that leads the student to drop out.

19. How should we involve the parents of ESL students?

Parent involvement is the best avenue for communication between the home and the school. Cultural activities that bring parents into the school to demonstrate arts, crafts, dances, and other features unique to their native roots validate the home culture for ESL students. In the classroom, parents can bring a sense of history through storytelling and by recounting the events that brought them to this country.

By recognizing the importance of the native language and culture, the school can diminish the intergenerational tension that often occurs when children merge into the new culture and come to view their parents as hopelessly bound to the past, literally to another time and place. Maintaining the native language and culture is the key to avoiding generational conflicts.

At the same time, schools need to increase parents' understanding of the English-speaking culture, the school culture specifically but also that of the larger society. Bringing parents to school for orientation workshops given in the native language by a bilingual teacher or aide or by a leader in the native community is a starting point.

Another useful outreach activity is home visits by teachers, usually in the company of a bilingual aide to serve as translator. Often, a home visit provides a better insight into the extended family structure because of the presence of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends of the family.

Parent-child activities are also important, especially with younger ESL children. One school used a trip to a pumpkin farm followed by parents helping their children carve jack-o'-lanterns as a means of introducing Halloween customs. This activity helped to dispel concern in the native community about a holiday focusing on skeletons, ghosts, and witches – something that initially was alarming to them.

Another school working with immigrant preschool children developed kits containing a storybook, an audiotape of the story, and a tape player, which parents could check out and take home. Use of the kits was demonstrated during parent meetings at school. They proved to be very popular, because parents could share in the children's learning while also learning English along with their children. Additionally, this outreach activity touched other family members, such as grandparents, who often are the primary caregivers in the home but frequently get overlooked by schools in their parent-involvement activities.

The key to effective parent-involvement activities is to make them opportunities for *mutual* learning.

20. Where do we find materials for ESL instruction?

ESL materials should support a multi-sensory instructional approach. Photographs, illustrations, charts, and other visual media are useful for vocabulary and concept development. Also, materials that provide for active engagement and hands-on involvement, such as creative dramatics or experiential science programs, help the second-language learner to build meanings, even though not yet proficient in English. Audio- and videotaped information can be effective if the language is simple enough to be understandable by limited-

English speakers. The same is true for computer programs (see Question 21).

At the preschool and early elementary levels, many standard classroom materials used with English-speaking children can be equally effective with second-language learners. In higher grades, the vocabulary load and sentence complexity of standard materials may be too difficult for limited-English speakers and may have to be adapted into "sheltered" English versions (see Question 15). However, many of the high-interest/low-vocabulary materials designed for remedial instruction are effective with ESL students.

Your state department of education's office for ESL or bilingual education often provides lists of materials developed by the department or by school districts in the state, as well as lists of publishers that distribute ESL materials. A number of major publishers now produce ESL material, and more are entering the field as the enrollment of second-language learners increases. A "starter" list of publishers distributing ESL materials is found in the Resources section at the end of this fastback.

21. Can instructional technology help in ESL instruction?

Absolutely. There are numerous computer programs on the market today that can be used for second-language learners. Apple's "Early Language" software for young children, with its adapted keyboard, is a good example. In the main, computer programs for ESL students should contain lots of graphics, use simple English (at least for beginning second-language learners), and provide for as much active involvement as possible.

Computer programs with an audio component can provide practice in oral comprehension and pronunciation. Take care, however, that the programs selected have high quality audio and sound natural. The tinny, robotic sound production of some programs, which can barely be understood by a native-English speaker, will be incom-

prehensible to the second-language learner – and certainly cannot serve as a pronunciation model.

Other technologies, ranging from videotapes to calculators, can be as useful for ESL students as they are for regular students. Such innovations as calculators that can be displayed on an overhead projector and, for older students, graphing calculators need to be introduced in ESL classes as they are brought into overall classroom use. The more that technology can support and extend multi-sensory instruction that activates all learning modes, the better it is.

Several of the companies listed in the Resources section also provide instructional technology materials.

22. How can we fund the ESL program?

From a public policy standpoint, the ESL program serves a growing segment of the school population and should be funded out of the general budget in the same manner as any other instructional program. However, the need for such programs is so great in some states that special "start-up" funds – and sometimes ongoing operational funds – are available through state-administered grants or other channels. Also, federal funds may be available for specific programs under Title VII. Application for federally funded projects usually are coordinated by state departments of education. Grants also may be available through local businesses or community foundations.

23. What kinds of records should be kept for the ESL program?

Good record keeping is essential for continuity in instructional services to ESL students. Basic information, such as the the initial home language survey (see Question 3) and progress reports, belongs in the student's working file. This student file is maintained by the ESL teacher and moves from teacher to teacher as the student changes schools or levels. When the student is transferred out of the district,

this file may be placed in storage. Because ESL students, particularly those from migrant-worker families, often move back and forth between locales, having this stored "back-up" file can facilitate placement and instruction should the student return to the district. The back-up file can provide immediate access to a student's instructional history in lieu of the official permanent record file, which eventually follows the student but can take weeks or even months to arrive. The back-up file is also useful for students who are "exited" from the ESL program but later experience difficulty in school and need to be re-admitted to ESL services.

Following are some of the items that should be kept in the ESL student's working file:

- Copy of the home language survey
- Language proficiency test results
- Skills attainment checklists
- Copies of progress reports and awards
- Records of key experiences, such as field trips
- Examples of student work
- Communications with parents

In short, any information that helps the ESL teacher understand the student's individual instructional needs and learning history should be in the working file. Certain information may be duplicated and placed in the official permanent file.

24. What type of ongoing training should ESL teachers have?

ESL teachers can benefit from a professional development plan that includes continuing education in language and linguistics. At the same time, inservice sessions or, at minimum, briefings on the cultural backgrounds of the students in the ESL program are valuable. If a district experiences an influx of refugees or immigrants from a particular geographic location, then it will be important to obtain up-to-date infor-

mation about the recent political events, cultural history, and language characteristics of the new group.

Colleges and universities, state departments of education, and nearby school districts with established ESL programs can be sources for ongoing training. A network of federally funded, regional "multifunctional resource centers" provides inservice programs for ESL and bilingual teachers and administrators, programs which often are tailored to specific local requests.

Professional conferences are another source of ongoing education. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), and their state affiliates are two professional organizations that sponsor annual, or more frequent, conferences. (See the Resources section for addresses.) The sessions at these events feature everything from research reports to promising instructional practices. In most instances, there are publisher exhibits where teachers can review the latest in textbooks and other instructional materials.

25. What types of inservice should regular teachers have in ESL?

Regular teachers can benefit from much of the same ongoing education as ESL teachers, especially with regard to cultural characteristics of second-language learners in the ESL program. Another focus for inservice is how students learn a second language. (See Questions 14 and 15.)

Resources

Books and Articles

The following list of books and articles provides a sampling of the resources available for both ESL and regular classroom teachers who work with second-language learners. They cover a variety of philosophical approaches and offer instructional strategies, teaching tips, and other useful information.

Arthur, Beth M. "Working with New ESL Students in a Junior High School Reading Class." *Journal of Reading* 34 (May 1991): 628-31.

Bowman, Barbara T. "Educating Language-Minority Children: Challenges and Opportunities." *Phi Delta Kappan* 71 (October 1989): 118-20.

Boyle, Owen F., and Peregoy, Suzanne F. "Literary Scaffolds: Strategies for First- and Second-Language Readers and Writers." *The Reading Teacher* 44 (November 1990): 194-200.

Cummins, Jim. *Empowering Minority Students*. Sacramento: California Association for Bilingual Education, 1989.

Educational Research Service. *What We Know About Culturally Sensitive Instruction and Student Learning*. Arlington, Va., 1991.

Esling, John H., ed. *Multicultural Education and Policy: ESL in the 1990s*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1989.

Hamayan, Else V., and Perlman, Ron. *Helping Language Minority Students After They Exit from Bilingual/ESL Programs*. Washington, D.C.: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1990.

Johns, Kenneth M., and Espinoza, Connie. *Mainstreaming Language Minority Children in Reading and Writing*. Fastback 340. Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1992.

Johns, Kenneth M. *How Children Learn a Second Language*. Fastback 278. Bloomington, Ind.: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, 1989.

McCauley, Joyce K., and McCauley, Daniel S. "Using Choral Reading to Promote Language Learning for ESL Students." *The Reading Teacher* 45 (March 1992): 526-33.

Moustafa, Margaret. "Comprehensible Input PLUS the Language Experience Approach: A Longterm Perspective." *The Reading Teacher* 41 (December 1987): 276-86.

Seelye, H. Ned. *Teaching Culture*. Lincolnwood, Ill.: National Textbook Company, 1984.

Sutton, Christine. "Helping the Nonnative English Speaker with Reading." *The Reading Teacher* 42 (May 1989): 684-88.

Publishers and Distributors of ESL Materials

The following list is a sample of companies that teachers can contact for ESL resources. Major companies usually have local or regional representatives who can provide samples of ESL materials.

Addison-Wesley Publishing Company
Route 128
Readi g, MA 01867
(Textbooks and related materials)

Ballard and Tighe, Inc.
Oral Language Programs
480 Atlas Street
Brea, CA 92621
(IDEA assessment materials and related instructional materials)

Communication Skill Builders
3830 East Bellevue
P.O. Box 42050-MC
Tucson, AZ 85733
(Textbooks and related materials)

CTB
2500 Garden Road
Monterey, CA 93940
(Language Assessment Scales [LAS] and many other assessment instruments)

Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.
88 Post Road West
Box 5007
Westport, CT 06881-5007
(Newsletter: *MultiCultural Review*)

Longman Publishing Company
Longman Building
95 Church Street
White Plains, NY 10601
(Textbooks, support materials)

National Dissemination Center
417 Rock Street
Fall River, MA 02720
(Textbooks, professional books, classroom kits, software)

National Textbook Company
4255 West Touhy Avenue
Lincolnwood, IL 60646-1975
(Textbooks, professional books, and related materials)

O.R.E.A. Document Scan Center
5th Floor
49 Flatbush Avenue Extension
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(Language Assessment Battery [LAB] test series)

Prentice-Hall
Prentice-Hall Building
Sylvan Avenue
Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07623
(Textbooks and related materials)

Santillana Publishing Company, Inc.
901 West Walnut Street
Compton, CA 90220-5109
(Textbooks and related materials, many in Spanish)

Scott, Foresman and Company
1900 East Lake Avenue
Glenview, IL 60025
(Textbooks and related materials)

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Program
P.O. Box 6155
Princeton, NJ 08541-6155
(Secondary Level English Proficiency Test [SLEP] and other assessment materials)

Organizations

The following professional organizations are good sources of ESL information and resources.

Administrators and Teachers in English as a Second Language (ATESL)
1860 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 462-4811
(Affiliated with the National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, NAFSA)

National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
Union Center Plaza
810 First Street, N.E., 3rd Floor
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 898-1829

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
Suite 300
1600 Cameron Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 836-0774

PDK Fastback Series Titles

182. School Public Relations: Communicating to the Community
188. Legal Issues in Education of the Handicapped
187. Mainstreaming in the Secondary School: The Role of the Regular Teacher
189. Challenging the Gifted and Talented Through Mentor-Assisted Enrichment Projects
191. What You Should Know About Teaching and Learning Styles
193. The Teaching of Writing in Our Schools
194. Teaching and the Art of Questioning
197. Effective Programs for the Marginal High School Student
201. Master Teachers
203. Pros and Cons of Merit Pay
205. The Case for the All-Day Kindergarten
206. Philosophy for Children: An Approach to Critical Thinking
207. Television and Children
208. Using Television in the Curriculum
209. Writing to Learn Across the Curriculum
210. Education Vouchers
213. The School's Role in Educating Severely Handicapped Students
214. Teacher Career Stages: Implications for Staff Development
216. Education in Healthy Lifestyles: Curriculum Implications
217. Adolescent Alcohol Abuse
218. Homework—And Why
219. America's Changing Families: A Guide for Educators
220. Teaching Mildly Retarded Children in the Regular Classroom
221. Changing Behavior: A Practical Guide for Teachers and Parents
224. Teaching About Religion in the Public Schools
225. Promoting Voluntary Reading in School and Home
229. How to Start a School/Business Partnership
229. Planning for Study Abroad
230. Improving Home-School Communications
231. Community Service Projects: Citizenship in Action
232. Outdoor Education: Beyond the Classroom Walls
233. What Educators Should Know About Copyright
234. Teenage Suicide: What Can the Schools Do?
235. Legal Basics for Teachers
236. A Model for Teaching Thinking Skills: The Inclusion Process
237. The Induction of New Teachers
239. Recruiting Superior Teachers: The Interview Process
240. Teaching and Teacher Education: Implementing Reform
241. Learning Through Laughter: Humor in the Classroom
242. High School Dropouts: Causes, Consequences, and Cure
243. Community Education: Processes and Programs
244. Teaching the Process of Thinking, K-12
245. Dealing with Abnormal Behavior in the Classroom
246. Teaching Science as Inquiry
247. Mentor Teachers: The California Model
248. Using Microcomputers in School Administration
249. Missing and Abducted Children: The School's Role in Prevention
250. A Model for Effective School Discipline
251. Teaching Reading in the Secondary School
252. Educational Reform: The Forgotten Half
253. Voluntary Religious Activities in Public Schools: Policy Guidelines
254. Teaching Writing with the Microcomputer
255. How Should Teachers Be Educated? An Assessment of Three Reform Reports
256. A Model for Teaching Writing: Process and Product
257. Preschool Programs for Handicapped Children
258. Serving Adolescents' Reading Interests Through Young Adult Literature
259. The Year-Round School: Where Learning Never Stops
260. Using Educational Research in the Classroom
261. Microcomputers and the Classroom Teacher
262. Writing for Professional Publication
263. Adopt a School—Adopt a Business
264. Teenage Parenthood: The School's Response
265. AIDS Education: Curriculum and Health Policy
266. Dialogue Journals: Writing as Conversation
267. Preparing Teachers for Urban Schools
268. Education: By Invitation Only
269. Mission Possible: Innovations in the Bronx Schools
270. A Primer on Music for Non-Musician Educators
271. Extraordinary Educators: Lessons in Leadership
272. Religion and the Schools: Significant Court Decisions in the 1980s
273. The High-Performing Educational Manager
274. Student Press and the *Hazelwood* Decision
275. Improving the Textbook Selection Process
276. Effective Schools Research: Practice and Promise
277. Improving Teaching Through Coaching
278. How Children Learn a Second Language
279. Eliminating Procrastination Without Putting It Off
280. Early Childhood Education: What Research Tells Us

(Continued on inside back cover)

Fastback Titles *(Continued from back cover)*

281. Personalizing Staff Development:-The Career Lattice Model
282. The Elementary School Publishing Center
283. The Case for Public Schools of Choice
284. Concurrent Enrollment Programs: College Credit for High School Students
285. Educators' Consumer Guide to Private Tutoring Services
286. Peer Supervision: A Way of Professionalizing Teaching
287. Differentiated Career Opportunities for Teachers
288. Controversial Issues in Schools: Dealing with the Inevitable
289. Interactive Television: Progress and Potential
290. Recruiting Minorities into Teaching
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344. Discipline Strategies for Teachers
345. Learning Strategies for Problem Learners
346. Making Sense of Whole Language
347. English as a Second Language: 25 Questions and Answers
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351. Integrated Character Education
352. Creating Professional Development Schools
353. Win-Win Discipline

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